

Governor Ivey Announces Awardees of Crisis Center Funding



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PRESS RELEASES

MONTGOMERY – Governor Kay Ivey announced today, along with Commissioner Lynn Beshear of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and House Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter, the awardees of funding for crisis centers to serve individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders.

The providers and locations of the new crisis centers are AltaPointe Health in Mobile, the Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority, and WellStone Behavioral Health in Huntsville.

“Behavioral health care in Alabama is changing to better meet the needs of our citizens,” Governor Ivey said. “Expanding and enhancing access to crisis care services will also provide a range of tools to divert individuals from emergency departments and jails, maximize the limited behavioral health workforce, and most importantly, improve the quality of life for Alabama families and communities.”

The crisis care centers are a designated place for communities, law enforcement, first responders, and hospitals to take an individual who is in mental health crisis. The crisis care centers will include both walk-in access for individuals and the ability for hospital emergency departments and law enforcement agencies to transfer individuals to the center for crisis care, including short-term admission, medication management, and case management. Services will also include discharge planning and connections to ongoing behavioral health care services for longer-term care, if needed.

“We applaud the governor’s leadership and the legislature’s investment to establish these three pilot centers and create a safe place for those in crisis, which will offer a new level of care in our state,” Commissioner Beshear said. “Behavioral health crisis services are one of the most effective tools within a statewide system of care to improve the lives of people with mental health or substance abuse disorders.”

In the 2020 legislative session, Governor Ivey prioritized establishing a mental health crisis continuum of care, with efforts in the Alabama Legislature led by House Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter. The crisis care centers are a result of an \$18 million appropriation in the FY2021 General Fund budget approved earlier this year. The awards were granted through a Request for Information and competitive Request for Proposal evaluation and selection process.

“We have an opportunity to truly deliver on the commitment to better health outcomes for all Alabamians,” House Majority Leader Ledbetter said. “Without these types of crisis centers in Alabama, those in a mental health crisis will continue to be taken and admitted improperly into local jails and hospital emergency departments. There is an opportunity now to commit to improved crisis care for those with acute mental health needs and substance use disorders.”

These centers will help to:

- Reduce the number of arrests
- Reduce the frequency of visits to hospital emergency departments
- Provide individuals in crisis access to care
- Promote sustained recovery and provide linkage to community agencies and organizations, psychiatric and medical services, crisis prevention and intervention services.

Jails and hospitals are often the first entry point for many individuals in mental health crisis. These locations are not equipped to care for those with serious mental illness. Neither have the personnel or resources to address the needs.

The bold goal of establishing a crisis continuum of care supports the ideal outcome of zero unnecessary admits to the hospital emergency department and zero unnecessary bookings into jail. Crisis centers can provide many of the mental health resources that local law enforcement, hospitals, judges, families and individuals are desperately seeking in Alabama communities.

To learn more, please visit mh.alabama.gov/initiatives.